

027.87

Div-
Rel.

S 2112

A Letter of Enquiry

RESPECTING THE METHODS AND LANGUAGE TO BE
ADOPTED IN DEALING WITH MONOTHEISTIC
UNBELIEVERS.

Addressed to Missionaries

BY

TOWNSEND STORRS, M.A.,

Formerly Missionary in North India.

1887.

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.



B ELOVED BRETHREN IN CHRIST,

Will you suffer me to address to you a few words, as one who has himself had the privilege of labouring in the Mission-field for some years, and who, though no longer thus engaged, would still count it his highest honour to be permitted once more to go forth and preach among the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ. Increased knowledge of His salvation—not only in its glories yet to be revealed, but in the present blessings it bestows on the believer—makes me long the more to join again the ranks of those who are declaring its glad-tidings to the nations who know them not. But the Lord has other work for me to do.

Permit me, then, as one whose very life and joy is the Gospel you are preaching, and who loves you for that Gospel's sake, to say what is on my heart concerning a subject which you will allow to be one of great moment, and to ask of you a candid and unprejudiced hearing. This only do I desire—that you will bring my words to the test of the Holy Scriptures, to the authority of which I, with you, implicitly and loyally bow.

It is necessary, however, to offer one word of caution as to the manner in which we proceed to apply these Scriptures to any proposition which is brought before us. It is not an uncommon habit, when anything is proposed to us which seems in any way to contradict our previous ideas or practice, to treat it as an impertinent intruder, and to turn

to the Bible with the sole and anxious purpose of proving the proposition wrong. But this is not the act of a thoroughly honest mind—set upon knowing the truth. Such a mind proceeds to the enquiry in the spirit of candour, patience, and humility, with the question—“Is this right or wrong?” So far only as we are true, can we expect God to lead us into the truth. As He sends “delusion” upon those who wish to believe a lie; so will He send “the Spirit of Truth” into the hearts of those who in simplicity say to Him, “Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.”

Many of you are labouring among Jews and Mohammedans, and are encountering among them difficulties and opposition such as fall to the lot of no other Missionaries. None of the brethren are entitled to more lively sympathy or more earnest prayer on the part of those at home than are you. For my own part I can say, ‘I have you continually on my heart.’ It is to those of you who are thus engaged that I principally, though not exclusively, address myself.

The rejection of our message we may patiently endure, when that rejection arises from the hatred of truth and love of sin which are inherent in human nature, as it so often does in the case of the self-satisfied and worldly-minded Jew and Mohammedan; and by the help of God, in spite of indifference and opposition, we may joyfully persevere in the proclamation of the free grace and love which are in Christ, knowing that it is ours only to witness, that it is God’s to overcome.

Nevertheless, continued want of success should lead us carefully to consider whether there is anything in ourselves, or in our mode of delivering the message entrusted to us,

which is a stumbling-block to those to whom we are sent. And there are many of us who have reason to enquire whether our lives correspond to the Gospel we preach, and whether we ourselves are examples of that devotion to the will of God, and that unselfish love to men, which are its natural and proper outcome.

But this is not the question to which I desire at this time to draw your attention: rather I invite you to consider with me whether *our methods* of setting forth Christ before unbelievers are *Scriptural*, and whether there is on our part *any exaggeration or perversion of Scripture teaching* which tends to alienate from the truth the very ones we are seeking to lead to Him who is "the Truth." I believe that this is the case in several particulars. At the present time I propose to bring before you two kindred subjects, in one of which I think we have diverged from the simple method, and in the other from the simple teaching of the Lord's first witnesses.

One special difficulty lies in the way of the reception of the Gospel by either Jew or Mahommedan—the acceptance of the doctrines (1) of the Divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, and (2) of the Trinity, both of which seem to them directly to contradict that one truth which they hold so dear, and which in the case of the Mahommedan may be said to be the sum and substance of his religion—I mean the truth that 'God is one.'

I.

With regard to the DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST, the teaching of the Scriptures is so clear that we cannot entertain for a moment—even in the hope of allaying the bitterest prejudice—the idea of abating our testimony to

Jesus as the Son of God. With such declarations before us as those of John i. 1, where the Lord is spoken of as *θεός* as well as *πρὸς τὸν θεόν* ; or of Philippians ii. 6, where He is said to have been “in the form of God,” as well as to have taken “the form of man”; or of Hebrews i. 3, &c., where He is described as being the effulgence of the glory of God and the very image [or impress] of His substance, and is addressed in the words of Psalm xlv. 6, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever”;—we cannot doubt, or fail to teach, His true Divinity. Verily, He is the only-begotten Son, through whom all things were created—visible and invisible—and by the word of whose power they are upheld (Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2). He it is to whom has been given all honour and glory, and who has not only redeemed man and become the Head of His Church, but is destined to restore harmony throughout God’s universe—in “heaven and earth”—by the eradication from His kingdom of all that offends; laying the foundation of that restoration in His death upon the cross—when He gave Himself a sacrifice for sin. See Matt. xxviii. 18, Luke xxiv. 26, John i. 29, xii. 32, Acts iii. 21, 1 Cor. xv. 27, Phil. ii. 6-11, Col. i. 20, Heb. ii. 8, xii. 2, Rev. v. 8, 9, xvii. 14, xix. 16, xxi. 5, xxii. 3. To Him—as our Redeemer, Advocate, and coming King—be glory for ever!

But while holding fast the truth that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, it is important that in speaking of Him before unbelieving audiences, we should follow, as far as possible, the examples of the Apostles themselves.

Now we find that their usual method of preaching Christ was not, if we may judge by the examples given us in the Acts of the Apostles, to begin by declaring the *Godhead* of Jesus, but by proclaiming Him as *the man*, whom God had raised from the dead and through whom was preached to

them repentance and remission of sins, and by proving Him to be the Messiah for whom the Jews were looking.* We shall see this more clearly by glancing at one or two examples of Apostolic preaching.

(1.) If we turn to the first proclamation of the Gospel—that on the day of Pentecost—we find that the Apostle Peter, while declaring that it was the risen and exalted Jesus who had poured forth the Holy Spirit, the effect of whose presence they beheld, speaks of His resurrection and exaltation as *the work of God*, and so far from making mention of His Divine nature, calls Him “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God.” v. 22.

(2.) Or pass on to the next chapter, where the same Apostle is addressing the multitude in the temple. Here again we have no allusion to the Divinity of Christ. The Apostle indeed calls the Lord “The Prince of Life”; but he begins his address by saying, “The God of our Fathers glorified his servant † Jesus” (R.V.), ‡ and he closes it with the words, “Unto you first God, having raised up his servant, sent him to bless you.”

* There is apparently one exception to this custom of the Apostles, when in the synagogue of Damascus Paul “proclaimed Jesus that He is the Son of God” (Acts ix. 20, R.V.) But there is little doubt that the Jews were wont to speak of the Messiah under this appellation, and that the Apostle was not declaring the Divine nature but the Messiahship of Jesus. This Jewish idea of ‘the Son of God,’ we learn from Justin Martyr, was that He was a man born from men, but selected by God for the office of Messiah on account of His eminent virtues.—(*Justin Martyr, Dial.* 267.)

† With regard to the translation of the word *παῖς* in both these passages, whether it be ‘servant’ or ‘child,’ it may be remarked that it is quite distinct from the word *υἱός*—son, and does not necessarily imply close relationship or even dignity.

‡ I have quoted the R.V. throughout.

(3.) Again, if we look at the celebrated address of the Apostle Paul in the synagogue of Antioch (Acts xiii.) we find him saying, "Of this man's (David's) seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus," and four times declaring that 'God had raised up Jesus from the dead' (vv. 30, 33, 34, 37); but there is no allusion to His dignity as the Son of God.

(4.) Once more let us listen to the same Apostle, as he addresses heathen philosophers at Athens (Acts xvii). He thus concludes his brief discourse:—"But now he commandeth men, that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man (*ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ*) whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he raised him from the dead.*

The least we can infer from these examples is that these two chief Apostles—Peter and Paul—in setting forth the Gospel delivered to them, *did not begin* by presenting to their hearers a doctrine, which would at once have suggested a difficulty and led to controversy, but by giving proofs of the Divine mission of the Lord Jesus in His resurrection from the dead, and by proclaiming Him as God's chosen one—exalted to be Saviour and Lord of all, through whom the remission of sins was bestowed on all that believed. (See Acts ii. 38, iii. 19, v. 31, x. 43, xiii. 38.) By thus declaring the facts of His death and resurrection, and the blessings which flow forth to the world from these facts, they prepared men to accept Him in His exalted character as the Son of God.

We cannot avoid controversy, as *they* did not; but we need not court controversy, as they did not. If we follow

* See also Peter's address to the household of Cornelius.—Acts x. 34. &c.; also Acts xvii. 1-3., xviii. 5, &c.

in some measure the simplicity of their methods, we shall be rewarded by attaining something of their success, provided we, like them, are men filled with the Holy Spirit. We may rest assured that when men have accepted Christ as the author of their salvation, they will readily acknowledge His Divine nature, as of the one Mediator between God and man. Thus if we begin at the right end, and without referring to the Deity of Jesus, we preach Him as having died for our sins and risen again for our justification, our object will be attained in the confession by many lips that "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

I commend this question to your careful consideration. Remember ever that our object is not to induce men merely to believe a doctrine, but to accept the person of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners.

II.

BUT let us proceed to the still more serious difficulty of the doctrine of the TRINITY.

Here again I would urge the extreme importance of keeping close not only to the meaning, but as far as possible to the very terms of Scripture. 'The nature of God' is a subject too solemn for any speculations of our own, and too far beyond our comprehension for us to adopt any language, for which we have not the surest warrant. It cannot be necessary, and it certainly is not safe, to venture beyond the bounds of Scripture terminology in a matter like this. The Apostle Paul, referring to his own proclamation of the Gospel, says, "Which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but *which the Spirit teacheth.*" If then the Apostles expressed themselves in words 'which the Holy Spirit taught them,' what more do

we want? As soon as we go beyond these, we are in danger of using 'words which human wisdom teaches.' With such an assertion before us we can need no further argument to prove the importance of adhering closely to Scriptural language on this subject.

Thus alone are we free from all responsibility, when our message is rejected. We are in no way answerable, when men refuse to believe the plain assertions of our Lord and His Apostles; nor are we bound to give an answer to every objection which may be made to these assertions: but when we use terms which are not found in any part of the Bible, or draw inferences which are not drawn in the Scriptures themselves, we incur grave responsibility indeed.

This very term, "the Trinity," is nowhere to be found in the Bible or even in the writings of the first two centuries of the Christian Era. It was first adopted, as far as I can gather, by Gregory Thaumaturgus, who lived about the middle of the third century. When the Apostles, and the Christians of the age succeeding them, never used such a term, it cannot be either necessary or desirable for us to use it.

But in reality when we come to compare ordinary Christian phraseology (especially as we find it expressed in our liturgies and hymns) with the language of the Bible, we meet with the most striking differences—such as should suggest the question whether we have not diverged seriously from the simple doctrine as well as from the simple language of the Lord and His Apostles. Let me point out two or three patent examples of this.

(1.) Here for instance we have a remarkable fact.

Nearly every Christian *doxology* gives 'glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.' Such is 'the gloria' which is used alike in nearly all Church-of-

England and Nonconformist services: such also is the doxology which begins with the words, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," and ends with, "Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"; and that which concludes so many sermons, "Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost"; and those which we find at the end of so many of the Prayer-book collects.

But when we turn to the Scriptures themselves, we find nothing corresponding to these doxologies; for all ascriptions of praise throughout the New Testament are addressed

(a) to the Father, as in Rom. i. 25, and xvi. 25—27; Eph. iii. 20; 1 Tim. i. 17 and vi. 15, 16; Heb. xiii. 20, 21; Jude 25; Rev. iv. 11, and xix. 1; or

(b) to the Son, as in Rev. i. 5, 6, and v. 9-14, &c.; or

(c) to the Father and the Son, as in Rev. vii. 10, &c.; but *none* to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,—glory being given by the New Testament writers not 'to,' but 'in' the Spirit.

(2.) So too when we come to the *prayers* and *hymns* in use among the disciples of Christ at the present day, we discover the same discrepancy.

Thus while among ourselves prayers and hymns abound which are addressed to the Holy Spirit, we have no instance of such prayers in Holy Scripture, but rather read of "praying *in* the Holy Spirit" as in Jude 20, and in Eph. vi. 18.

We look through our hymn books, and find but few hymns addressed to the Father: whereas in the Bible, with the exception of such words as those of Stephen in Acts vii. 59, 60, where the Lord appears to His dying servant, or of Paul in Acts ix. 5, &c. where Jesus stays, in his career of persecution and blasphemy, him whom He has marked out as His

chosen messenger to the Gentiles, (see also 2 Cor. xii. 8, and Rev. xxii. 20), prayers are addressed to the Father; for thus our Lord and His Apostles both taught and practised. See Matt. vi. 6, &c., xviii. 19; Luke iii. 21, xi. 1, &c.; John xiv. 16, xvi. 23, xvii.; Acts iv. 24, &c.; Rom. i. 8-10, xv. 13; Eph. i. 15—17, iii. 14; Phil. iv. 6; Col. i. 3 and 12; 1 Thess. v. 23, &c.

Where, we may well ask, is a prayer to be found in the Bible corresponding to that with which the Litany opens—“O God the Father, . . . O God the Son, . . . O God the Holy Ghost, . . . O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God,” &c.? or where the equivalent of the hymn-book expression, “Three in one, and one in three”? We may seek to justify such expressions on the ground that they have been consecrated by long usage in the services of the Church, and that they serve to teach elementary lessons in theology: but we cannot defend them as being in conformity with Apostolic language, nor can we deem it an essential part of human worship to offer to God a metaphysical definition of His own Divine nature.

In connection with this subject of modern Christian terminology, has it never occurred to you as strange that we so often hear the words, “God the Son,” in place of the Scriptural expression, “the Son of God,” and “God the Holy Ghost” instead of “the Holy Spirit of God.”?

(3.) Or we might take the *benedictions* with which so many of the Epistles close, or the *greetings* with which nearly all open, and point out the same dissimilarity.

With the exception of the one benediction of 2 Cor. xiii. 14—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all,” which clearly proves the close association with the Father,

in government and grace, of the Son and the Holy Spirit—we have the benedictions in such terms as that of Gal. vi. 18—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,” or of 1 Thess. v. 28, or 2 Tim. iv. 22, or Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 25.

So with the greetings, with the exception of Rev. i. 4, where we have the remarkable and somewhat difficult addition—“From the seven Spirits which are before His throne,” *all* are in the name of the Father and the Son. How seldom, on the other hand, do we, in our day, hear any benedictions but the one exception, or others supposed to be modelled after its example, as that which runs, “The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost be amongst you,” &c.

With such a marked difference between Scripture phraseology and that which passes current among Christians, it behoves us seriously to consider whether these differences do not betoken some deflection from the doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures. I am fully persuaded that they do; and I crave your patient and unbiassed hearing while I seek briefly to set forth what I am convinced is the teaching of those Scriptures on this solemn and important subject,—teaching which, if it does not remove, certainly diminishes the difficulty of setting forth the truth to Monotheistic unbelievers.

Let me be quite plain, and say at once that the doctrine of the Trinity,—while it conveys no doubt the truth of the intimate union between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is manifest in the command to “baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matth. xxviii. 19), in the benediction of 2 Cor. xiii. 14, and indeed in the teaching of the whole of the New Testament,—at the same time forms a conspicuous departure from the

model of Apostolic language, and leads to perplexity and misunderstanding as to the nature of the Deity.

This is not the unity of the God-head—that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different *Persons* forming one Being (as body, soul, and spirit make up the one Christian man, or as three sides make up one triangle), in which case each Person would only be a portion, an incomplete part, of Deity; *nor this*—that they are but different *phases* of one Being, in which case we should be compelled in the opposite direction to explain away numberless passages of Scripture, and be landed in the mistakes of the ancient Patripassians and Sabellians, and modern Swedenborgians.

THE UNITY OF THE GOD-HEAD, according to the teaching of the Bible, CONSISTS IN THE SUPREMACY OF THE FATHER—as the origin and end of all things. THE FATHER IS THE ONE GOD. His is the essential Deity; the being, life, authority of the Son are derived, and His position is subordinate,—as the very name “Son” indicates, while at the same time manifesting unity of nature. See Matth. xxviii. 18, John v. 26, vi. 57, x. 29, &c.

This may appear a bold statement to make in the face of the traditions of many generations; but I am persuaded that in spite of the general use in public of unscriptural phrases of the nature I have been indicating, there has ever been a wide-spread acceptance among God’s true children of Scriptural modes of thought on this subject.

Let me proceed at once to bring before you, as briefly as may be, the teaching of the Scriptures.

1.

The Father is with all distinctness declared to be the “ONE GOD,” “THE ONLY GOD.”

a. Our Lord's language is unequivocal, as when quoting Deut. vi. 4, 5, He says, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, THE LORD IS ONE" (Mark xii. 29) Those who listened to these words could only understand Him to refer to Him, whom He was wont to call His Father: nor am I aware that it has ever been asserted that in them He spoke of the Trinity, including Himself—in His own divine nature—and the Holy Spirit.

But in His prayer in John xvii., He expresses Himself beyond the possibility of misunderstanding. There He thus addresses His Father in verse 3, "This is life eternal, that they should know THEE THE ONLY TRUE * GOD, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

b. The language of the Apostles is no less distinct.

The Apostle Paul, for instance, speaks thus in 1 Tim. ii. 5, "There is ONE GOD, one Mediator also between GOD and man, Himself man, Christ Jesus." Here the "one God" can only mean "His Father;" for we can only imagine a Mediator between parties distinct from Himself, His special fitness for the office arising from a participation in the nature of both.

But, as if for the very purpose of defining the unity of God, and rendering doubt on this subject impossible, the same Apostle says in another place (1 Cor. viii. 6), "Yet to us THERE IS ONE GOD, THE FATHER, of whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him." I confess as I gaze at a passage like this, I stand amazed at the ingenuity which has managed to exchange the language

* The word here used for "true" is the same as that in John xv. 1, "I am the true Vine"—not ἀληθῆς "true" as opposed to "false," but ἀληθινός "true," i.e. "the original," "real," "actual," "true in the highest sense."

and doctrine of the first two centuries for those of later ages. "There is one God, the Father."—Could anything be clearer?

Eph. iv. 5, 6. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ONE GOD AND FATHER of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." The Apostle is impressing upon the Ephesian Christians the fact of the unity of the Church, and in doing this reminds them that they are *one* body, indwelt by *one* Spirit, and animated by *one* hope. In the Gospel *one* Lord Jesus had been presented to them, whom they had received by *one* faith—sealed upon them by *one* baptism; and thus they had been admitted into the family of the ONE GOD the Father of all. We have in this and the preceding verse the mention of "one Spirit," and "one Lord," and then as distinct from both, "ONE GOD and Father of all."

1 Tim. i. 17. "Now unto the King eternal, incorruptible, *invisible*, THE ONLY GOD, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. "Which (*i.e.* the appearing of Christ) in its own times He shall show, who is the blessed and ONLY POTENTATE who *only* hath immortality *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*: to whom be honour and power eternal. Amen."

When we compare with these two last verses the statements of John i. 18 and 1 John iv. 12, which tell us that "No man hath seen GOD at any time, the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," no doubt can remain that the Father is "the only God—the *invisible*," "the only Potentate—*whom no man hath seen*," to whom glory is thus given.

In Rom. iii. 30, "If so be that GOD IS ONE," the language is scarcely less distinct; for the whole context—especially

vv. 22, 24, 26, of this chapter—compels us to conclude that ‘God’ here refers to the Father.

Lastly in John v. 44, the Lord says to His hearers, “The glory that cometh from THE ONLY GOD ye seek not.” [The margin says, “Some ancient authorities read ‘*the only one* :’ this would not affect the force of the passage. The translation in the A.V. “God only” is undoubtedly incorrect. See *Alford in loc.*] He has just been speaking of His Father in whose name He has come, and adds immediately afterwards, “Think not that I will accuse you to the Father.”*

“Let all these passages have their due weight and *no longer will doubt be possible* that the Father is the “ONE God,” “the ONLY GOD,” according to the Scriptures.

2.

Then we have a number of passages in which the Father is spoken of as “THE GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,” or in terms of like character.

* We might have added a reference to 1 John v. 20—“*This is the true God* and eternal life”; but there is not, as in the other instances we have adduced, the expression ‘one’ or ‘only God.’ The word “This” can only speak of the primary subject of the previous sentence, which is “Him that is true,” *i.e.*, the Father. The words, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ—“His son,” shut up the reference to the Father. Compare with this John xvii. 3. “I own,” says Dean Alford on this passage, “I cannot see, after this saying of our Lord—“That they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent,”—how any one can imagine that the same Apostle can have had in these words any other reference than that which is given in those.” See, however, Alford’s more lengthy note on these words.

In Gal. iii. 20, we have the expression—“God is one.” Here, however, it would seem to mean that ‘God is one of the two parties’ between which Christ is the mediator, and to have no special reference to the unity of God.

a. Under this head, notice first that on three distinct occasions the Lord Jesus either addressed His Father, or spoke of Him, as "MY GOD." On the cross He cried out, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Mark xv. 34.) After His resurrection He said to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and *my God* and your God." (John xx. 17.) But not in the agonies of crucifixion only, or even in His risen might; in His glory also, as one seated with His Father on His throne, He speaks of His Father as 'His God.' Thus in His message to the Church of Sardis He says, "I have found no works of thine fulfilled before *my God*" (Rev. iii. 2); and in v. 12 of the same chapter, addressing the Church of Philadelphia, He *four* times repeats the same expression, "He that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple of *my God*, and he shall go out thence no more, and I will write upon him the name of *my God*, and the name of the city of *my God*, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from *my God*, and mine own new name."

How is it that our Lord thus, on three different occasions, calls His Father 'His God'? He cannot be referring merely to His human nature; for that would render His language meaningless. For instance, no satisfactory explanation can be given of His words to Mary Magdalene—"My Father and your Father, my God and your God"—on the supposition that He spoke only as man, and did not mean to infer that God was His Father and God in a sense distinct from that in which He was the Father and God of His disciples. Manifestly He spoke not merely as man, but as *the Divine Son*. Nor can we imagine Him to have referred only to His humanity, when from His exaltation in glory He again said of His Father, "My God." We

can only understand such language on the ground that He wished to emphasize the supremacy of the Father. This is the natural and obvious meaning of His words.

b. Perhaps even more remarkable than these passages in which the Lord Jesus Christ calls His Father 'His God,' are those in which the Apostles do the same. Of the language of both we confidently affirm that they are only consistent with the truth that the Father is, in the highest sense, the "one" and "the only God."

What clearer statement can there be than that of Eph. i. 17, where the Apostle uses the expression "THE GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father of glory" ?

But we have, besides this, several passages in which very similar words occur. In no less than six—Rom. xv. 6, 2 Cor. i. 3, xi. 31, Eph. i. 3, 1 Pet. i. 3, Rev. i. 6,—the expression is used, "THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." In all these passages the R.V. has translated the words as I have quoted them, though in three out of the six passages the A.V. has the rendering, "God, even the Father," &c. But even if this latter translation be correct (neither the English nor American Revisers think so), you will perceive that the Father is spoken of as God, as distinct from our Lord Jesus Christ.

(c.) Here are other passages which as distinctly state the truth I am insisting on. Look at them carefully, and allow that they mean what they say.

1 Cor. iii. 23. "All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

1 Cor. xi. 3. "The head of every man is Christ, . . . the head of Christ is God."

1 Cor. xv. 28. "Then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all."

3.

If we seek to enumerate the passages in which the Father is spoken of as GOD in contradistinction to Jesus, as Lord, or Christ, or Son, we may well say that time and memory fail us,—they are so numerous.

a. Take for instance the opening verses of the Epistles.

This distinction between the Father as GOD and Jesus Christ as *Lord* is manifest in the *greetings* of 11 out of the 14 Epistles of the Apostle Paul. Thus taking the Epistle to the Romans as an example (for they are almost word for word the same), we read, “Grace to you and peace from GOD our Father, and the *Lord* Jesus Christ.” In the openings to the three Epistles which are exceptions to this rule, we find expressions equivalent to these, or perhaps even more striking. Thus in Col. i. 2, while the greeting runs, “Grace to you and peace from GOD our Father,” the Apostle adds, “We give thanks to GOD the Father of our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (v. 3). So also the first Epistle to the Thessalonians is addressed “unto the Church of the Thessalonians in GOD the Father and the *Lord* Jesus Christ” (v. 1). In Heb. i. 1, 2, we have, “GOD . . . hath at the end of these days spoken to us by *His Son*.”

The same distinction may be observed in the other Epistles. The Epistle of James opens with the words, “James, a servant of GOD and the *Lord* Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Peter in the first Epistle, addressing the brethren “of the Dispersion” uses the expression, “According to the foreknowledge of GOD the Father, in sanctification of the *Spirit*, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus *Christ*”; and in his second Epistle, after using the words “Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ,”* he goes on

* See however the marginal translation, “Our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ.” The American revisers say, “Let the margin and the

with words in which the contrast, we are speaking of, is manifest, "Grace to you . . . in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our *Lord*." The opening words of the second Epistle of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the book of Revelation present the same contrast.

b. What is true of the greetings of the different Epistles is true also of the rest of their contents. Let it suffice to quote a few passages in illustration of this.

1 Cor. i. 30. "But of Him are ye in *Christ* Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God."

1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same *Spirit*. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same *Lord*. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all."

2 Cor. xiii. 14. The grace of our *Lord* Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all."

It is particularly worthy of notice that both in this and the previous passage, in which the union between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is so strikingly manifested, the Father is called God, as distinguished from the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit.

Gal. iv. 6. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the *Spirit* of His *Son* into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

text change places." The A. V. has it, "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." It would seem to me that the language of the very next verse, "of God and of Jesus our Lord," compels us to take the translation of the margin, with which Alford agrees. The omission of the article before *σωτήριος*, which is the cause of the translation in the text of the R. V., is sufficiently accounted for by the addition of the words *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* in apposition *after* it.

Eph. iii. 10, 11. "The manifold wisdom of GOD, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our *Lord*, &c."

Eph. v. 20. "Giving thanks . . . in the name of our *Lord* Jesus Christ to GOD, even the Father."

Col. iii. 17. "Do all in the name of the *Lord* Jesus, giving thanks to GOD the Father through him."

1 Thess. i. 9, 10. "Ye turned unto GOD from idols, to serve a living and true GOD, and to wait for His *Son* from heaven."

1 Thess. iii. 11. "May our GOD and Father himself, and our *Lord* Jesus, direct our way unto you."

Heb. ii. 3, 4. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which having at the first been spoken to us through the *Lord*, was confirmed unto us by those that heard; GOD also bearing witness with them . . . by gifts of the *Holy Ghost*," &c.

Jude 21. "Praying in the *Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in the love of GOD, looking for the mercy of our *Lord* Jesus Christ."

1 Peter iii. 18. "*Christ* also suffered for our sins once . . . that He might bring us to GOD."

In not one of these or any of the almost innumerable passages like them, is there any authority whatever for supposing that the word "GOD" can refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, considered as one. Such a supposition would be contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, and bring in the utmost confusion of thought. They all alike declare the "*principatus* of the Father."

c. Again we might refer to those passages in which the Lord Jesus Christ is called, as in Col. i. 15, "the image (*εικών* or *visible* representation) of the *invisible* GOD," or as in Heb. i. 3, "the effulgence of His glory and the very

image" (or rather "impress," as in the margin, Greek—*χαρακτήρ*), or as in 2 Cor. iv. 4, "the image of God." It can scarcely be necessary to point out that the Lord Jesus cannot be spoken of as the image of Himself, or as the impress of His own substance, and that the word "God" in these expressions can only refer to the Father. Such passages speak for themselves.

d. In connection with this distinction it is right to draw attention to the fact that even in those passages which plainly declare the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus, the supremacy of the Father is kept in view.

(1) Thus in John i. 1—"The Word was with God (*πρὸς τὸν θεόν*), and the Word was God (*θεός*)"—we cannot ignore the use of the article in the first clause, and its omission in the second.* It might be literally translated, "The Word was with *the* God, and the Word was God," *i.e.* a Divine Person—partaking of the Divine nature—but not the original Theos or Deity. Origen says in reference to this passage, "This scruple of many pious persons may be thus solved. We must tell them that He who is of Himself God is *ὁ θεός*, but that whatever is God besides that underived One (*αὐτοθεός*), being so by communication of His Divinity, cannot so properly be styled *ὁ θεός* the great God, but *θεός* a Divine Person (*οὐχ ὁ θεός ἀλλὰ θεός κυριώτερον λέγοιτο*)." With two seeming exceptions,† I am persuaded that this remark of Origen is true generally of the language of the New Testament.

* The alteration which has been made by the Revisers in Isaiah ix. 6 is remarkable. It is no longer—"the mighty God, the everlasting Father," but "mighty God, everlasting Father," without the article.

† The two apparent exceptions are John xx. 28, and Acts xx. 28. With regard to the former it is sufficient to explain the existence of the

(2) Again in Heb. i. 8, where the dignity of Christ as the Son of God is dwelt upon, the same distinction is maintained. Thus in the quotation from Psalm xlv. 6, 7, where the Son is addressed as God, it is added, "Therefore God, *thy God*, hath anointed thee, &c.;" and in that from Psalm cx., where it is written, "To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit thou on My right hand," it is Jehovah—"the LORD," who speaks to Adonai—"my Lord." *

article in the words, "My Lord (ὁ κύριός μου) and my God (ὁ θεός μου)," by 'the New Testament usage of expressing the vocative by the nominative with the article.'

The words in Acts xx. run thus:—"The Church of God (τῶν θεῶν), which He purchased with His own blood." [The reading of the R.V. and A.V. I believe to be the true one, though many ancient MSS. have "of the Lord" (τῶν κυρίων).] Here I am persuaded that the word "God" refers to the Father; for in purchasing the Church with the blood of His Son, He purchased it with "His own." It is no irreverence to transfer the words to the case of an earthly parent, who might say with truth of any acquisition, which had cost the life of his son, that 'he had purchased it with his own blood.'

* The distinction between Jehovah (translated "LORD") and Adonai—the representative of Jehovah—(translated "Lord") is frequently observable in the Old Testament. For example, in the vision of Isaiah (Is. vi.), to which the evangelist in John xii. 41 refers as speaking of the Lord Jesus, it is Adonai, whom the prophet beholds sitting on His throne. So too in Malachi iii. 1, it is Adonai of whom it is said, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant." This is "the angel of the LORD," through whom Jehovah manifested Himself to His ancient saints—as to Abraham (Gen. xviii. &c.), Hagar (Gen. xvi. 7, &c.), Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 13, &c., xxxi. 11, xxxii. 24, &c., which compare with Hos. xii. 3, 4—"He had power with God and prevailed: yea, he had power over the angel"), Moses (compare Ex. iii. with Is. lxiii. 9, where it is said that "the angel of His presence saved them"), Joshua (Josh. v. 13, &c.), Gideon (Judges vi. 11, &c.), Manoah (Judges xiii.), &c. Speaking of

(3) Once more, in that remarkable passage, Phil. ii. 6, &c., we have this contrast between the Father and the Son. In the expressions, "counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God," and "being in the form of God," it may be noticed that the word "God" is here without the article and so is equivalent to a "Divine Person." In this case the meaning would be, "being in the form of a *Theos* (a Divine Person), he thought it a thing not to be grasped at* to be equal to a *Theos*, but emptied himself, &c.," the Apostle in both expressions referring to the Divine nature of Jesus as Son, and not to the Father at all. But even if it should be insisted that the word for "God" refers to the Father, still it remains true that the Father as "God" is contrasted with the Son. But notice particularly verse 9 of this passage, where it is written, "Wherefore also GOD (*ὁ θεός*) hath highly exalted Him,"

these Theophanies, as they have been called, Canon Liddon in his Bampton lectures on the Divinity of our Lord says, "The angel of the Lord is certainly distinguished from Jehovah; yet the names by which he is called, the powers which he assumes to wield, the honour which is paid to him, shew that in him there was at least a special presence of God." It is because He spoke as the representative of Jehovah, that on nearly each one of these occasions in one verse the angel of the Lord is said to speak or manifest Himself, in another the Lord Himself. "The only-begotten of the Father—He hath declared Him;" so that when the Son speaks, the Father speaks through Him; when the Son manifests Himself, He manifests the Father who sent Him. "No man hath seen God at any time;" but "he that hath seen Me," says Jesus, "hath seen the Father."

In no place, however, is this distinction more clearly brought out than in this Ps. cx. of which we have been speaking—"The Lord said unto My Lord." The word Adonai seems to have the same relation to Jehovah in the Old Testament which *θεός* has to *ὁ θεός* in the New.

* The word here is not *ἀρπάγη*—'robbery,' but *ἀρπαγμός*—'a thing to be grasped at,' or 'seized as prey.'

and verse 14, "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord* to the glory of God the Father." *

4.

It is only needful to refer very briefly to the *general language of our Lord Himself*, when speaking of His Father,—language in every expression confirming the truth I have been asserting—that the unity of the Deity consists in the supremacy of the Father.

a. When He says, "The Father is greater than I;" or when both He and His Apostles speak of God 'giving or sending His Son,' as in John vi. 57, where He says, "The living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father," (see also John iii. 16, vii. 29, xx. 21; Matt. xxi 37; Rom. viii. 32; Gal. iv. 4; 1 John iv. 10); or when He declares that He came not to do His own will, as in John vi. 38, vii. 28, Heb. x. 5—9, &c.; or that He can of Himself do nothing, John v. 19—30; or that His is a derived authority and life, John v. 26, 27, Matt. xi. 27, xxviii. 18, 19; or when He calls Himself or is called "the Son of God," Matt. iii. 17, Mark ix. 7, &c.;—in all these places the Father is acknowledged as supreme, and as the origin of the Son's being, life, and authority.

If it be again asserted that Jesus Christ in these expressions speaks thus of Himself, or is spoken of, only with respect to His human nature or His mediatorial office, we can only reply that this is a pure assumption, and that we must at least have some distinct Scriptural authority for thus dealing with these numberless texts. Surely the very expressions 'sent,' 'gave,' &c., speak of a time before the incarnation, and so before the mediatorial office was assumed.

* The absence of the article before *θεῶν*—"God" is accounted for by the *πατρός*—"Father" following in apposition.

I am persuaded that unwillingness to recognize the Divine side of Christ's nature in such passages as these tends strongly to mere humanitarian views.

On one occasion we find the Lord saying that the day of His coming not even the Son knew, but the Father only, Matt. xxiv. 36; on another, when two disciples came to Him, applying through their mother for exalted places in His kingdom, He replies that to sit on His right hand and on His left was not His to give but to those for whom it was prepared of His Father, Matt. xx. 23. When a young man came to Jesus, calling Him "Good Master," He replied, "Why callest thou me good: none is good save one, even God." Luke xviii. 16. Now to say that the Lord was not here considering the question of His Divinity, and gave this reply in order to teach this self-satisfied young man, who looked upon Him only as a human teacher, that human goodness reaches not to God, is quite true as far as it goes; but it is not a complete or satisfactory answer. Well do I remember how years ago, a brother-Missionary, whom I had accompanied on a visit to a learned Moulvie at Lueknow, urged this as an explanation; but the Moulvie—not a *mere* caviller—was not satisfied, nor was I. How could the words of Jesus be true, if, after all, He meant Himself when speaking of God? How misleading it seemed! Yes, the Lord *must* have meant that He, of whom He ever spoke as His Father and even His God, was the only source of goodness, and must have been at least acknowledging that His own goodness was derived. Common honesty compels us to this simple interpretation, which is consistent with all else that the Lord Jesus says of His Father.

b. But that I may not weary you, just let me point you to the language used by Christ, when accused of making Himself 'God' or 'equal with God,' as in John v. 18, and x. 33.

(1.) When in the first of these cases, accused of making Himself equal with God, He says that ‘the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing’ (v. 19), prefacing His words with “*Verily, verily*, I say unto you;” was He, “the Truth,” evading the question? or was He, while asserting His unity of nature with the Father as His Son, expressly and purposely acknowledging His subordination to the Father, and the derivation of His every power from Him?

(2.) It was just the same in the second case, when He was charged with making Himself God. Has it never struck you how utterly inconsistent His reply is with the traditional language of Christendom on the Lord’s relation to His Father. ‘If you allow,’ He seems to say, ‘that the term ‘God’ may be applied (as it is applied in Psalm lxxxii. 6, and “the Scripture cannot be broken”), to those to whom the word of God came (angels—as world-rulers—are, I think, here referred to); how much more may I apply the term to myself, *whom the Father hath sanctified and sent* into the world, and call myself the *Son of God.*’ Surely here there is no assumption of equality with God. If it be argued that the equality of the God-head is manifest in the words, “I and my Father are one,” it is sufficient to point out in reply, not only that the word for “one” here is in the neuter gender, *ἓν*—meaning “the same thing”—but that similar language is used by our Lord Himself in ch. xvii. 22 in reference to believers, there comparing the union, which He desired should exist between them, to the union which existed between Himself and His Father—“that they all may be one (*ἓν*), even as we are one (*ἓν*).” The Lord spoke as the representative of the Father, and the unity which He claimed was the unity not merely of relationship, but of representation, of will and purpose. It is as if I were to

send my grown-up son on an important errand with full authority as my representative, and he were to say to those who resisted his authority, 'It is the same thing whether I speak or my Father; for I and my Father are one.' With reference to the expression which follows later in this chapter—"The Father is in me and I in the Father"—we have only to point out that the same words are used in other places with regard to His union with His disciples, as in John xiv. 20, xv. 4, xvii. 22, 23, &c. If it be said that the Lord's language in the one place indicates that Jesus is God in the same sense as the Father; the reply at once arises that it follows from the use of the same words in other places that we are also Christ, in the same sense as He is—which God forbid!

5.

I have said nothing about the Holy Spirit; for verily—while Holy Scripture seems so decidedly to speak of His personality and of His association with the Father and the Son in the work of redemption and grace, and while He is the special gift from the Father, sent forth by the exalted Christ to lead believers into truth, to bind them together in true unity, and to be in them a power for holiness of life, and for service in the Church and world, by His indwelling making them Divine temples; nay more, being thus the very guarantee of their resurrection to eternal glory,—there is no passage which speaks of Him as God. In this assertion I am not forgetting that in 2 Cor. iii. 18 we have the expression, "the Lord the Spirit"; but even if these words refer to the Holy Spirit (and I am inclined to think that they do not, but refer to the Lord Jesus, in accordance with 1 Cor. xv. 45, where He is termed "a life-giving Spirit"), the term "the *Lord* the Spirit" is quite distinct from 'God the Spirit,' as may be seen from passages like Acts ii. 36, "God hath made

him both *Lord* and Christ." (See also Phil. ii. 9—11, and the many passages already quoted, in which God the Father is spoken of as distinct from the *Lord* Jesus Christ.)

It is usual, I know, to quote such passages as Acts v. 3, 4, where Ananias is charged first with lying against the Holy Ghost and then against God; from which it is argued that the Holy Spirit is the Supreme God: as if it were not enough to understand that in lying against the Comforter whom God had sent, he was lying against Him who sent Him.

I have even heard such passages as that of Rom. xv. 30—"the love of the Spirit"—quoted as proving the God-head of the Holy Spirit, it being said that 'because God loves us, and here the Spirit is said to love us; therefore, as He manifests this divine attribute, He is God.' But if He is the witness of God in the hearts of believers, He necessarily manifests His love to and in them. I would, however, here also suggest that "the love of the Spirit" is rather that love which the Spirit begets in the hearts of believers, in accordance with Gal. v. 22, where love is spoken of as "the fruit of the Spirit." But whether this be so or not, in this passage, as in so many others, the Spirit is spoken of as distinct from the Supreme God—"I beseech you, brethren, by our *Lord* Jesus Christ and by the love of the *Spirit*, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

-I confess I cannot understand how any one can resist or evade these simple and conclusive reasons for adopting the methods and phraseology of the sacred Scriptures in reference to the nature of God. I cannot think for a moment, my brethren, that there is in you—anxious as you are to remove every hindrance to the progress of the Gospel, to the spread of which you have devoted your lives—any desire to resist or evade the truth. But rather, I am persuaded, that many

of you have never seriously considered the subject, having taken as a matter of course the truth of the traditional teaching which has so long prevailed in the Church, and having studied only those passages which are supposed to lend support to that teaching. If with an honest and unprejudiced mind you will seek only to know the truth, I have no fear of the result. We *may* know the truth in this matter; for our Father in heaven has not allowed His nature and that of His Divine Son to be shrouded in mystery and confusion. The confusion has only been produced by departure from the simple doctrine of the Scriptures.

It not unfrequently happens that—when a subject such as this is mooted, and anything which runs counter to our preconceived ideas is broached—the exclamation is heard, “ Well, this is a mystery; we cannot understand matters of this kind, and are afraid of prying into the secrets of God.” And most true it is that no man by wisdom can find out God. But this is of itself a reason why we should be content to take what we have plainly taught us in the Scriptures, and not add to it the result of our own inferences. There are, I believe, six “ mysteries ” mentioned in the New Testament,—(1) the mystery of God’s purposes of grace to the Gentiles (Eph. i. 9 and iii. 3, 9); “ the mystery of godliness,” which (whether *ὁς* or *θεός* be the true reading) relates to the incarnation (1 Tim. iii. 16); (3) “ the mystery of iniquity ” (2 Thess. ii. 7); (4) the mystery of God’s dealings with Jews and Gentiles, and of Israel’s blindness (Rom. xi. 25); (5) the mystery of the marriage of the Lamb, and of the union of Christ and His people (Eph. v. 32); (6) the mystery of the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 51): but of these six, one only relates directly to the Divine nature—namely, the mystery of the incarnation. But the

particular point which I want you to notice is—that the true meaning of a mystery is a secret thing *now revealed*, and that the mysteries of the Gospel are those truths which, before it came, remained hidden, but which are now *made known* to the initiated Christian, thus superseding the Greek and Heathen mysteries, which were secrets kept from the public, but known to the initiated. Those who are willing to follow their Master fully and loyally, will assuredly find that in everything—in this as in every other part of the Christian life—“He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall see the light of life.” God has given His children a Revelation, not to perplex and mystify them, but to *reveal* Himself to them in Christ.

This subject I leave with you, asking you not to speculate or philosophize, but to take the Scriptures as your *sole* authority. At the very least, do not take upon yourselves the responsibility of using terms which do not occur in Holy Scripture, or of defending doctrines which are not there stated. Beware of the danger of casting stumbling-blocks before men. “Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come: but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!” (Matt. xviii. 7.) These words are the Master’s, not mine.

I would only add that it is in no love of differing from my brethren or of dictating to them that I have brought this subject before you. It is because I am deeply convinced of its importance, and because I have an aversion to heresy and a fear of human tradition—which now, as much as in the time of our Lord, “makes the Word of God of none effect.” When I consider the evil results of these traditions on this particular point—in the alienation of *thousands* from the truth on the very threshold of enquiry into the claims of

Christ, and in the strong temptation to Socinianism which they offer—I cannot withhold what I am fully persuaded is the truth of God. Though I have written this by snatches, owing to the pressure of other work, I have written with prayer that I who write and you who read may be honest before God—without desire for man’s approval, or fear of his disapproval. How often have those words of my Master rung in my ears, “How can ye believe which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh of the only God ye seek not?”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

I am, in love and sympathy,

Yours faithfully,

TOWNSEND STORRS.

*Newington Green Road,
London, N.*



